Passage 11 Al-Baqarah (2:30-37)

30. Behold, your Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Will You place there one who will make mischief there and shed blood?- whilst we celebrate your praises and glorify your holy (name)?' He said: 'I know what you do not know.' 31. And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: 'Tell me the names of these if you are right.' 32. They said: 'Glory to You, of knowledge we have none, save what You have taught us: In truth it is You who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.' 33. He said: 'Adam! Tell them their names.' When he had told them, Allah said: 'Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?' 34. And behold, We said to the angels: 'Bow down to Adam'. And they bowed down. Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject faith. 35. We said: 'Adam! You and your wife dwell in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things in it as You wish. But do not approach this tree, or you will run into harm and transgression.' 36. Then Satan made them slip from there, and got them out of what they had been in. We said: 'Go down, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood, for a time.' 37. Then Adam learnt from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord turned towards him; for He is often-returning, most merciful.

(A) Theme:

The main themes are:

- God's messengers/Prophets (Allah's special relation with His Messengers)
- Special status of Adam (A.S)
- God created Adam, as well as everything else (e.g. angels), and made him a vicegerent (khalifa), which suggests God values humans above angels. (his especially elevated status granted by God's decree.
- God gives knowledge to who He wants, and He gives the special status of prophethood to whom He wishes.
- When Satan misled Adam, God did not leave him or allow any obstacle to prevent him from making Adam His representative on earth, in other words God looks after His Prophets.
- On repentance on their mistake Adam and Eve were pardoned by God who awarded them a new phase of worldly living. The Quran mentions this phase at another place as: "it is We, Who have placed you with authority on earth" (7:10).
- Adam was forgiven when he repented, God's forgiveness and mercy extends to all.

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(B) Importance of the Theme:

- This gives Muslims a sense of their connection to God as Adam is called the father of humankind and everyone is descended from him.
- God made the angels bow to Adam. This showed his elevated status amongst God's creatures and that of humanity in general.
- They are told the reason for making human being superior over all other creatures.
- God appointed man (byway of Adam) as his vicegerent on earth because of the knowledge and free will.
- The free will is a test for humans as they can be enticed by Satan to commit sins. The Quran warns about this by saying: "for Satan is an avowed enemy to man" (12:5, Yusuf).

- God granted forgiveness to Adam. This should make humankind believe in God's mercy and forgiveness and they should repent.
- Shows God's care and direct relationship with every individual.
- Makes one realise the importance of knowledge and learning.
- Teaches people to stay away from arrogance and pride.
- The passage tells about God's mercy and forgiveness as he accepted repentance by Adam. The Quran reminds Muslims repeatedly of this attribute of God: "if anyone does evil, or wrongs his own soul but afterwards seek God's forgiveness. He will find God Oft-forgiving and most Merciful" (4:110, Al-Nisa)

Examiner's Report about student's answers

(a) *Main themes*

Excellent responses talked about the themes in a very mature way, without relying on paraphrasing. Talked about God's assistance and support for His Prophets, His granting of special knowledge and wisdom as well as human's role as vicegerents on earth.

*Some candidates spent too much time comparing the passage under discussion with other similar passages. While it is a good idea to quote a passage which expounds similar themes, as a reference, comparing different passages is not what is required in this question. The candidates must narrate the themes/underlying ideas present (**not merely paraphrase the translation)**, elaborate on them, and support with a quote where relevant.*

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(b) *Importance*

The most insightful answers talked about the changes in a Muslim's thoughts and actions that are brought about by the themes of Qur'anic passages discussed in part (a). Creation of a sense of accountability, a more cautious attitude towards the Earth's natural resources, hope and belief in God's assistance as well as miraculous events, awareness of Satan's malicious nature and consequences of haughty behaviour were some of the ideas that were explored in such responses.

Many candidates either simply stated what Muslims should or should not do or suggested that

Muslims should believe in and be fearful of God and follow what the Prophets taught.